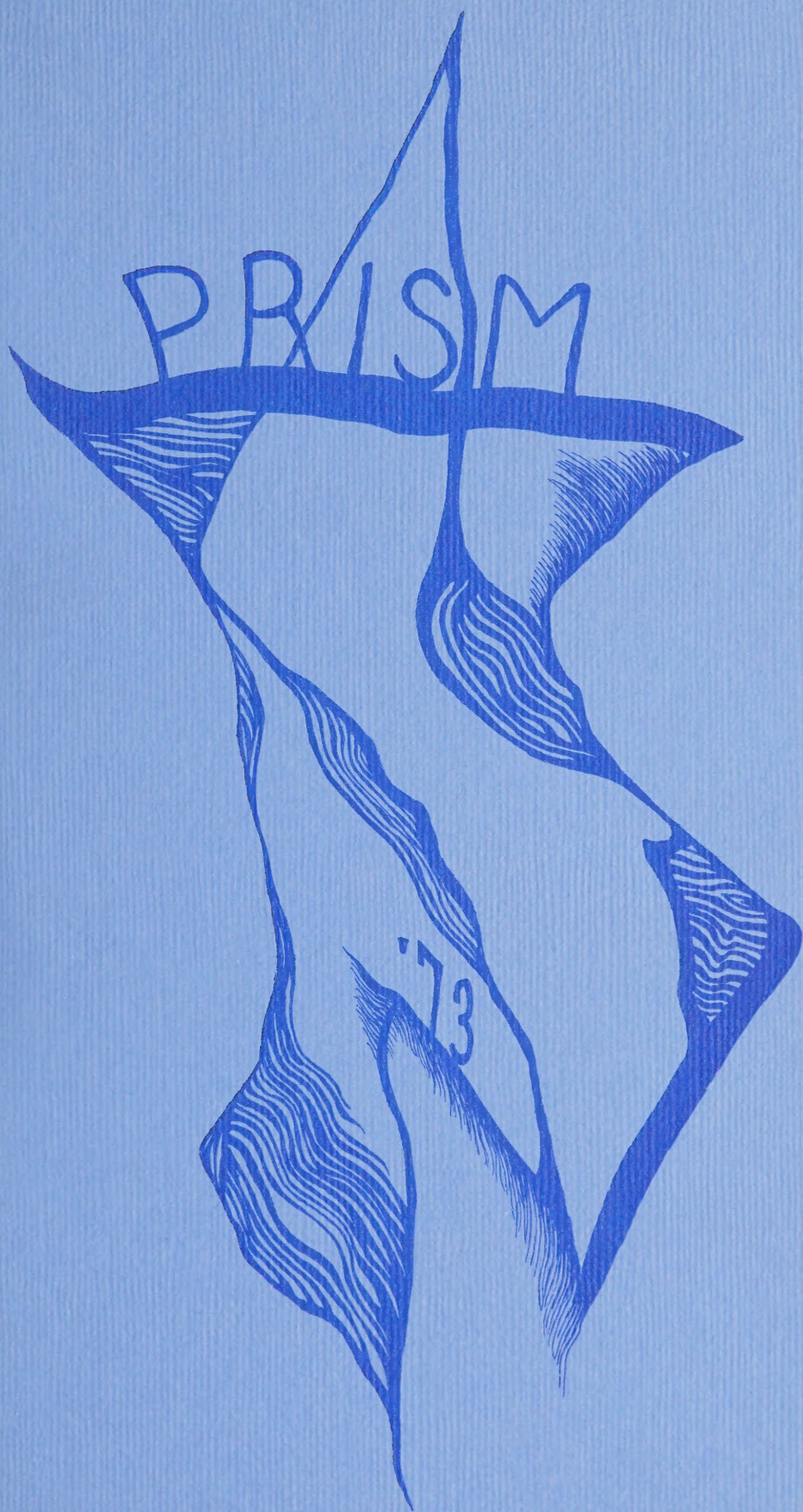




PRISM

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1973

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*That the transparency of sunlit words should
disperse my multi-colored meanings to you . . .
that my words should be the prism of emotions.*

WIND

The wind blows the minutes off into night,
As we sit listening to our life tick by.
But fleeing, we are together, you and I.
Beware of time, it flies.
So stay with me as we listen
to the wind blow our life into the
dark of the unknown.

—NANCY RANEY

I PRAY THE LORD

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
Now I'm six years old you know,
Tomorrow, would you make it snow?

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
Now I'm twelve years old you know.
Could you make my bra size grow?

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
Now I'm sweet sixteen you know.
Can't I get a call from Joe?

Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep.
Now I've twenty years you know
And not sure where my soul will go.

—SUSAN DILL

SEASONS OF LIFE

Green leaves appear—
 a baby is born
Flowers start to bloom—
 those feet have wiggly toes
The cool winds blow—
 a secret escape from the play-pen
Dreary showers fall—
 that precious puppy dies
Warm days arrive—
 a shiny, new bicycle.

Wading barefoot in the creek—
 the excitement of first date
Thunder storms break the night—
 a broken romance
Days grow long and hot—
 graduation seems miles away
The coolness of a shade tree—
 wedding bells and a band of gold
Crops grow tall and strong—
 the pride of parenthood swells.

Crisp winds ruffle the grass—
 the children leave for school
Green turns to red and orange—
 the last child takes a wife
Cheers are heard from the football stadium—
 at last you're able to "see the world"
Heavy rains beat the earth—
 the first feeling of loneliness sweeps your heart
Golden crops are ready for harvest—
 that sweet grandbaby snuggles your neck.

Brown leaves settle to the ground—
 Peace settles the soul
The first snow, fluffy and white—
 the grandchildren briefly visit
All is cold and dark—
 Gone.

Spring has come again—
 Heaven.

—ROBIN STELL

DOWN WILL COME BABY

The ugliest baby I ever saw
was squatting in a shopping cart
on a head of cabbage.
Lord of the leafy hill,
it carved me
with scissor-edged eyes.
Another page from Nature's book
of dirty jokes . . .

Poor diapered gargoyle—
ripped from satin sleep
into a world hell-bent on beauty
born to lose and lose and lose
a worn, frayed hole
in the crazy-quilt of time.

Cry baby eyes,
soon to see the ugliest truth—
hate and beauty go hand in hand.
List, tiny one, to my lullabye:
Honor not thy Mother Goose,
but learn from Humpty Dumpty.
Little boy blue, come blow your life,
. . . no one will weep.

—TERESA TOMLINSON

RAIN

Rain———
The Statistic of Death
Coming again, again—
Chilling drops moisten
an unsuspecting field.

—JEANIE SPANGLER

FLY AWAY

The waves rolled gently under the hot summer sun. Along the shore the sea gulls played. With each passing boat, the gulls flew, screaming.

To the child pressed against the window the sea gulls were special. Randi longed to be out playing with them. If only she, too, could fly away.

It was pleasant being alone in the nursery she shared with her younger brother, Phillip. Randi was nine, a small and fragile child. Enormous brown eyes gave her not the look of beauty, but of haunting patience. She never smiled and was always silent. The nursery was her refuge; she seldom left it. Only Phillip, the nurse, and the mail entered its door. She had been there all morning.

Phillip was the favored child. His curly blonde hair and sparkling blue eyes gave the appearance of a lively angel. He had spent the morning with his parents.

The sea gulls were Randi's only friends. She loved them. They understood and asked nothing in return. Now, as she watched, they suddenly scattered, their cries breaking the quiet harmony of the setting. Randi spied Phillip, throwing rocks. One unfortunate bird didn't fly away with the rest, but fell to the earth.

Silent rage gripped Randi. Her flying feet were unheard to Phillip as he threw the remaining rocks in the sea. Only when she stood panting behind him was he aware of her presence.

He greeted her with a long familiar chant, "Cat got your tongue, cat got your tongue, cat got"

Like lightning she sprang; somewhat astonished by the assault, he was like putty in the salt water.

The astonishment never left his face. The waves sealed it there. Phillip's chant was silenced for all eternity. Randi smiled.

Back at the nursery window, watching the gulls returning, she was content knowing Phillip would never throw rocks at them again.

—RHONDA STRAWN

THE GAME

Tense, beneath furry coats
 they wait,
Thirty-thousand strong and yet as one
 they watch
The battle below with great leonine eyes.

Mindless hunks of straining muscle,
 grunting robots pound the turf,
And the thunderous roar
 of blood-bent animals in the stands
Cracks the moon.

Drained, under coats of fur
 they leave,
Thirty-thousand grinning beasts all refreshed
 they lust,
For one more night of glory sport.

—TERESA TOMLINSON

Trees are eruptions from the mind of the earth.

—BROOKS CUSHMAN

A man walks alone
Limping on one fleshy leg
Indifferently eyeing
Eager sympathizers who have
Never realized a realness in themselves;
All except the child over
There with ice-cream
Inching over one lip, he knows
Of realness . . .
Now.

—JEANIE SPANGLER

THIS WIND THAT NEVER CEASES

I

Born when the wind
Whipped across the March land
Blowing a storm of
The wisdom it had gathered
To rage in her forever
And set fire to the souls
Of others.

II

Nursed by the land
Loving its offsprung children
Entangled in the triangular
Trinity of nature
She became one with
Everything she touched
Never bound to drab existence
She was free and crisp
Like autumn leaves
On gusty days
That fall and float
But never touch the ground.
Only the poisonous cruelty
Of wicked cowards
Made her temper strike
And with earth's maternal instinct
Of protection
She fought for justice
And always won.

III

And now her breath has
Ceased from sight
But the hollow silence
Waits for the signal
Of her re-entrance
Alone I feel
The wind gather, then
Rush through my heart
Relighting a restless
Flickering fire,
I catch myself looking
Then remember that I
Can never see this wind again
But still I know
That the wind never ceases
And I listen for her spirit.

—BROOKS CUSHMAN

REMEMBERING . . .

Sandcastles and crabs
a moonlit night
a little girl on Santa's knee
laughter and teasing
the game — piggy back
a whimpering puppy
a penny in an out-stretched hand
a thoughtful kiss

Now are just memories of you.

—CAROL ANN HODGES

I love my home,
I really do,
And so I'm glad
I'm not a Jew.

—TERESA TOMLINSON

YOU . . . SLEEPING

She who ever knits
the raveled sleeve of care
shields you in her womb
no burden do you hear
the pillow is a frame
the masterpiece, your hair
your face . . . a sea of calm
awake . . . one of despair.

—SUSAN DILL

Good times are like a rose bud found early in the morning,
all closed, innocent, and happy.

Slowly the bud opens into a more beautiful rose with
dew drops to sparkle and dazzle.

People find and watch in awe this beautiful happening.

Time passes;

The heat of the day dries the diamond drops and opens
the once sweet and innocent bud.

Now
nothing is hid from the human eyes. The once beautifully closed,
mysterious bud is open.

Now
people know what it looks like fully bloomed, and people
turn their eyes and do not watch it wither and die.

For
They do not care.

—CAMILLE PATTERSON

SUMMER

Summer can't keep it's cool.
It's a potato row under your neck,
A fly on the wrong side of the screen,
A locked classroom,
The stuffy smell of cured tobacco.

The sun wakes with a smile.
It floats swiftly across the sky,
And is stopped by the loud crow of a rooster.
It admires the quiet town,
The empty parking lot,
The wet grass,
And the clean children.

Beer cans cluttering the sides of the road,
Girls braless and boys in tank tops,
Cold cream on a hot back,
Your legs stuck to the car seat,
The roar of the angry ocean.

The sun leaves.
The sunglasses are taken off,
Loud talk becomes whispers,
The dead cat in the road becomes even flatter.
A golden top is lightly laid over the sea,
It's a star-spangled night.

—SUSAN CRAFT

Depression:
Solitary confinement within the
boundaries of my mind.

—CAROL ANN HODGES

LIFE IS LIKE. . .

Life is like a skills test:
 trying to beat the clock. . .
tic toc
looking for your sock
 listening to Bach
silencing those who mock
pausing before you knock.
 now. . .
 it's
 time
 to
rest! ! ! ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

—COLLEEN McDONALD

NIGHTFALL

Nightfall:
Darkness
Punctuated
By sharp,
Shimmering lights.
God is present
In the heavens
And in shadows
Of tall pine trees.
Crickets humming,
Vehicles pass
Like rushing wind.
Breaking awesome
Silence
Into ordered
Restful
Stillness.

—CYNTHIA RENEE BLAND

LOST LOVE

We wrote our love
in the sand
To show to people
across the land.

A wave crept up
As we turned,
And to the sea
Our words returned.

—JACKIE WELCH

ODYSSEY

Odyssey
a few pages away — oblivion
under odor
which comes after oddity
and above the O.E.D.
Incidentally which means
Oxford English Dictionary
which is a funny definition to be
found in a Webster's
Only to be followed by oenomet
— a wine and honey drink
Odyssey
amidst confusion
means by Webster's standards
an
extended
wandering

or journey

for me —
to the bottom
of this page

—CAROL ANN HODGES

AND SOME SHALL STAY

The skin of her arms hung flapping from the bones as she reached down. One at the time, she put her feet into the sleeves of the faded red housecoat. Her purple lips let out a small, exasperated grunt between the clicking of her dentures.

"Well, h'it ain't right, jest ain't now." She pulled the red rag harder. "Rawl, come here an' jest look what I done now, I want you to."

"Rawl" otherwise known as Royal, chuckled, spit tobacco juice, and folded Life to mark his place.

"Woman, woman; what are you doing now?" It was the bemused tone with which he had addressed his wife for over fifty years. His watery blue eyes flicked, then dimmed at the sight of this seventy-eight year old baby. On the edge of the gray vinyl couch she sat with her hard, calloused hand under her chin. Her sallow face, creased like chicken scratch, shook back and forth in a bewildered attitude.

"Why in the world they want to go messin' with my good dresses for I jest don't know. T'ain't right now, t'ain't." She mumbled as she bent over to her feet again. Royal squatted down, puffing in little breaths, to unwind the housecoat.

"I do declare, Lib, you know the young'uns mean well when they come here an' clean up" He struggled to button the rag over her breasts which sagged like socks. "It does so go this way, woman. I do say." But his voice had little trace of impatience. It was a common routine. "And dammit all, ain't nobody hid your clothes. You jest don't know where you put 'em."

With a snuff of retort, Lib braced herself with her arms on the couch, then raised her body, swinging it out. Almost bent double, she limped across the remodeled porch that was the den. Clicking her dentures all the time, she defiantly spread her face with bath powder and straightened the dirty old net on her hair.

"Used to of, wouldn't of done anything of the sort," she muttered. The wrinkles of her powdered face were like ravines in uneven snow. "Used to listen to me. Now they don't even want to eat here — like as I can't cook anymore. Don't think I can keep my own house neither. I been doing it fer fifty years, I tell ye." Her voice got stronger as she argued. To prove her point, she hobbled into the kitchen to busy herself with dishes that held the left-over supper that would be supper tomorrow night too.

Royal rocked in his red chair patched with tape and squeaked back and forth. He pulled a tobacco pouch out of his overall pocket and pushed tobacco into his mouth.

"There's still right much spunk left to her. Always was a fusser." Little black pieces of tobacco burst out the working mouth. "Even after

Helen-Golds died, she sprung back afore me. Took it better. Helen-Golds woulda been a woman like her ma. Smart as a city lawyer an' good at working too."

The old man remembered their twelve-year-old daughter looking after her little brothers and sisters in the yard. She had held her medium figure straight, almost stiff, and raked the dirt beside the porch. When she laughed at a toppling baby brother, her cheeks puffed like apples. Under her thick chestnut pixie, fervent brown eyes strained. Her mother, he thought, must have been the same at twelve. And with the nostalgia, he could see the blue spot on her virgin chest from the baseball's thud.

"Damn fool young'uns," he thought now. "Can't even play ball in the field away from the schoolhouse. Hit the ball and break my young'un instead of a window."

She had been his favorite. When the cancer set in, he wept with her in pain just as deep as the physical pain. Years later the memory was like a black and white photograph. Her death had been clicked into focus once again when he listened at the backdoor as Lib told a grandchild about Helen-Golds. A sharp reproduction of Helen-Golds rolling from one side of her bed to the other in agony came easily. "An' all I could do was wash her face and tell her she won't going to die like she kept saying she was. We knew she was gone though." Lib's mahogany eyes watered briefly as if a wind had slapped her face. "And when she went, we bought her a watch like she always wanted an' put it on her wrist. Ya' daddy like to of gone crazy. I had to make him forget, but it took two-three year."

Work had been the solace Lib had prescribed for both of them. But on Sundays, she would slip into the girl's room as softly as the sun rays did through the Venetian blinds. Methodically she emptied every dresser drawer, smoothed and refolded every piece of underwear, and then laid them back. The paper rose, the cheap dimestore ring, the splitting New Testament were dusted and put back to sleep the way their mistress had put them to bed. Eventually, as the other children grew older, she found less and less time to go to the enshrined room. Finally she went only on Helen-Golds' birthday.

"Yep, she woulda made a right perty woman," Royal thought now. He sighed through his nose and bent down to take off his brogans. In the kitchen, a crashing pan split the humid air. The light clicked off and Lib shuffled back into the den on bare feet. She had put her bedroom shoes somewhere, but couldn't remember where. The sudden contrast between memory and reality was shocking, and Royal blinked back into old age. Lib said little now that she had forgotten her anger. Clicking her dentures, she sat on the couch beside the new furnace and absently folded her hands in her lap.

"Dog if'n it ain't been a hot one today." Lib said several minutes later.

"Yep." Royal bent his head over to aim for the spittoon. As he glanced out the window, he saw an authoritative blue station wagon rocking down the path toward the box-shaped house. "Looks like Bill an' Miriam's coming to get their ham."

"What?" Lib asked vaguely; she didn't turn around to see what was happening. "I reckon they've had supper. It's nigh onto semem o' clock."

Royal settled back in his chair, his jaws working methodically in an up and down circle. The car door slapped keenly shut, the second slam slightly muffled by the stronger slap of Bill's door. Miriam's face popped up at the glass in the wooden door. She scraped her feet on the straw mat and came inside with the assurance of a grown child coming home.

"Good evening." Her easy smile was guarantee of her joy at seeing her parents. She was small-framed and wiry like her father; brown-eyed, coarse-haired, quick in features and looks. Truly, she was her father's daughter except that his eyes were as blue as the new station wagon. "How ya'll getting along this week?" Her voice was a little patronising when she spoke to her mother. Otherwise it was cheerful and concerned.

"Oh, tolerable, tolerable," Royal mumbled. He shot a swift brown squirt into the spittoon. "How you, Bill?"

While her husband answered and asked the usual amenities, Royal noticed Miriam's eyes darting about the room: floor, rugs, tables. Clareece had come today. "Good," he knew she thought, "I won't have to clean for once."

"Enjoying your new furnace, m'aam?" Bill asked his mother-in-law.

"Yeah, I reckon so. Ain't had much need for it yet. Been so hot." Lib smiled compatibly. She wasn't sure who these people were; but, they were guests. "Ya'll let me fix ya' a bite t'eat now."

"No-o ma'am, we had supper long ago. Came to see about the ham. You just sit still now, Mrs. Lib; me and Mr. Royal can get that old pork."

"Mama, I brought some Eaglebrand milk to make ya'll some lemon pies. Think you'd like to have one tomorrow?"

Royal grunted a little as he got out of his resting position and pulled his overall strap up. "Had a new litter of pigs come today," he told Bill as he reached over the clock for the key to the smokehouse.

"That so sir. How many?"

Royal could hear Lib begin to fuss as he and Bill went out the door. "Now what'd you want to go and do that fer? Every time you come you cook or clean or something." Her memory came back in moments

of anger. Bill didn't understand why the old man chuckled but he waited respectfully for a response to his question.

"Oh, 'bout ten I reckon. If'n she were through when I fed-up. One of 'em looks mighty poorly though."

The key had to be jammed into the rusty padlock which dripped from the gray smokehouse door like a dirty tear. Royal spit and grabbed the lock with both big warty hands to turn the key. Bill stood back a little out of the way.

"You strong old cuss!" he blurted out. When the lock snapped open, Bill reached a long, muscle-knit arm over the little old man to help swing open the door. Sunset sent gray and black dusty stripes through the slats of the antique smokehouse. The porkshoulders hung solemnly in state. Royal thought he could have touched the dust particles in the sunrays that flashed like lasers, stopping at the hams then flowing on past like an arrow shot through.

"Here now, let me get that, Mr. Royal," But the knotty old man was already wrestling with the wire that hooked over the rafter. Huffing from the weight of the ham, he began to tremble all over as he struggled to get it down. Bill stepped forward but did nothing more. The old man could get the ham without too much strain. As soon as it was loose from the rafter, however, Bill caught it up in an armful of newspapers. "Looks like it cured just fine. Not a trace of skippers on top anywhere." Bill kept on talking to the ham as he lowered his head and stepped over the board at the smokehouse door. He carried the ham like a baby. Royal raked his throat and expelled the black knot of tobacco in front of him. He knew Bill had purposely ignored his trembling. Openly panting through his mouth now, he propped himself with his shaking left arm on the salt bin. Sweat had oiled his face like an ancient Greek athlete's, and his whole body felt like mint tastes as the sweat cooled him. His left hand still jerked in its own silent anger, and he couldn't get his breath to stop boxing.

"Damn," he thought. "Can't even carry a ham no more." He shook his head and walked cautiously on out the door. He was steady now as he hit the padlock with the heel of his hand. But the trembling unsettled him mentally. "B'lieve I'll go check on them pigs, Bill," he called over toward the car.

"Sure thing." Bill slammed the back of the blue wagon and headed back toward the porch.

Geese were complaining in the pig lot, and they skimmed the ground in a little herd headed for the pond. Old Blackie lumbered over to the barn, and the cows moaned about the deep afternoon as Royal unwrapped the chain that held the gate. All the sounds were the same every night; the sudden ooch of a pig, the hens' gentle, collective cackle, the thudding hooves of the mule headed for feed. And above all, the incessant content-

ment of the crickets. Every night it was just as calm and soothing. Royal walked through the animals with one hand in pocket, the other scratching his neck. He was accepted in the animals' bedroom; he was not alien. In a hole dug out next to the side of the barn, the delivered sow was plopped on her side. The mass of lard moved up and down in rhythm with her snorting breaths. The pink babies lay all over each other for warmth; some of them suckled. Royal smiled a withered, toothless smile and began to count the pigs when he noticed another old sow lying half in the dark beside the hole. She might get too close to the little pigs. She was half-blind, the oldest sow he had. Mud caked her mulatto hide wrinkled with age. He ought to kill her this fall; but, she wouldn't sell for minimum price a pound. "Move on now. Soo-ee, I say." He poked her with a stick. She jerked from sleep grunting in surprise and rolled out of the way. Royal counted the pigs again. Ten. Or was it nine. Couldn't half see anymore. Nine. In the gray fuzz he barely saw a limp figure almost under the barn. Born dead or stepped on. Could be that sickly one. Ten in all. He went for the shovel.

When Royal wrapped the chain around the gate again, he heard Miriam talking in vague, condescending tones. They must be getting ready to leave. Royal walked up to the car; his brogans kicking out in long strides, his hands in his pockets. "Ten pigs, Bill. One dead."

"That so. Happens right much don't it, sir."

"Yep, too much. Sure woulda ruther had that old sow kick off than that new pig. Ya'll leavin'?"

"Daddy," Miriam cut in, "I made you some pies for tomorrow. We'll see you Sunday." She opened the car door. "Me and Eva want to talk to you about Mama. Can't nobody do a thing with her. And you can't really look after her and cook and clean and all of it. She's pure-T dirty. I can't get her to let me wash her." Miriam put one petite foot in the car, took it out, and put it back in.

"I know, I know. Sometimes I jest can't hardly stand it no more. Had her feet in the sleeves of her housecoat today. Can't tell her a thing." He shut Miriam's door with both big hands. "She don't know nothing anymore. But I can't bear to think about being away from her." He unzipped his overall pocket and took out his tobacco pouch. "Jest have to find somebody to stay here's all. I don't know whut to do with her."

Royal caught the glance Miriam shot at her husband.

"Well, Daddy, you can't take care of her. Ain't none of us can come stay here. You ain't going to get nobody to come way out here and stay either. We'll talk about it Sunday, all right?"

Lib stuck her head out the back door like a cuckoo bird. "Ya'll come see us again, ya' hear. Nice seeing ya'. Won't no need to fix nothing to eat though. We got plenty."

"Evening sir." Bill called out the car window.

"Bye Daddy." Miriam waved like a ten-year-old.

The blue automobile spontaneously hummed alto and meandered out of the yard toward the path. Royal stood watching the young couple's self-assurance for a moment, then turned and went inside.

"Well, don't stay long do they? Course 'tis getting late," Lib said.

"Yep," Royal grunted as he sat back down. "Oh me, oh me." He felt terribly tired now.

"What ails you, Rawl?"

"Tired, tired and old is all. Tired and old." He took off his brogans again. Then he peeled off one pair of socks, next, a second pair full of holes. Lib was contentedly clicking her dentures. Royal stood up painfully and pulled the straps of his overalls down first on one side, then the other. He dropped the muddy denim at his feet, standing like a brown Pygmy in his unions.

"What you want to do that for? I say, Rawl! Pick up them muddy clothes. Think all I got to do is pick up after you?"

"Hush woman, hush." Royal dragged the overalls into the bathroom.

"Jest look, I do know." Lib was still fussing to the room in general.

Royal chuckled as he reached for the light switch. "Go on to bed now." Lib ambled toward the dining room by the shimmer of the lamp they used for a night light. Royal went out on the porch to relieve himself. He still seldom used the bathroom built thirteen years ago when Lib had the den built. He stood on the porch for a while and looked out at the night. The farm was settling down. Occasionally a pig would squeal. Out over the tops of the corn, Royal could see the tall tombstone standing straight and white in the moonlight. As straight as Helen-Golds herself used to stand.

"Jest ain't right somehow. Kinda like that little pink pig got stepped on. Still ain't right." He shuffled on back into the house and into the bedroom. He had one knee upon the high bed when he heard Lib. "What the Sam Hill," he muttered. "I do declare." From within the womb of the black house he could hear her talking to herself.

"Now . . . this ain't right. This ain't right now. Where am I? Rawl . . . Rawl! Where am I?"

The night light had gone out. In the black dining room, Lib was bent over like an Indian mummy, feeling of the table, trying to find her way to the bedroom.

—MARTHA W. ARTHUR

Tears are nothing but a clean flood
trickling up from a damaged heart.

—MARSHA WRENN

If the years to come,
Could but carry
The laughter of youth!

—LESLIE WILSON

DEFINITION

Poetry, to me, is a form of writing that
formulates
and
concentrates
imaginative and artistic awareness
beyond or above the
truth of history or nature.

It is that which embodies a
beautiful
renewal
and
perusal
of thoughts or actions in melodious
and rhythmical language
possessing
and
confessing
a quality of emotional response,
while showing feeling
with
appealing
spontaneity and grace.

—DEBBIE TOLMAN

SONG OF MYSELF

My life is a symphony:
A pattern now harmonious, now cacophonious,
Yet unified by the things that make me
Myself;
By the characteristics that, compounded, yield
My identity.

I am an opus whose strain was heard
And set down by a great
Composer,
Who created my soul;
Who set down my theme,
Elaborated upon it,
And made me
Me.

I am an orchestra
Directed by my Creator
(Or at least I hope to be
When I stop being stubborn
And blend my melody
With His):
Now the triumphant trumpet
Now the gleefully whistling flute,
Now the soulful violin,
Now the despairing tuba,
Now the clashing, echoing cymbals
Now a discord
Shatters to pieces my tune.
Then I am unified by the Director,
And the process starts all over,
Forming the elaborate themes
That constitute the symphony
Of my life.

—CYNTHIA RENEE BLAND

ENCOUNTER

In a clear sky
Two clouds bumped
and merged as friends
to float in peace
Only in a storm of anger
Do they clash
and start a racing war
of noise and evaporation

—BROOKS CUSHMAN

NOW I LAY ME

Vincent Price pie for supper,
 nightmare a la mode
cried myself to wake, and
now is the time for all bad men. . .
to come.

Shivering in a goosebump bed
 owly eyes patrol the dark
Death sighted at twelve o'clock high!
whistle in my breath—
asthma set to music.

Boxcars on the nightmare special
 jump the tracks of my mind.
Black is not velvet, it's
woven cactus
and 3 a.m.'s the perfect hour for
sweaty repentance.

—TERESA TOMLINSON

SLOW DEATH ON A LONELY SATURDAY

On my desk
Lies an unwritten letter
full of words
written by my heart
but speechless still,
Just as speechless,
I lay on my cushioned
dream machine
listening to a recorded
humming bird
roundly sealed,
and wander out the window
watching the fog intertwine
in and out of telephone wires
and autumned tress.
Clanking machines hidden by
ugly buildings puff out
an artificial fog.
A person with sleeping eyes
strolls in and yawns a word or so
unconsciously bumming a cigarette,
exiting in search of a match.
The slammed door
makes the fog disappear
and me jerk round
to glance towards
an empty bandaid box
leaning against a picture cube
of a deceased cat.
The ivy in the beer bottle
is dying too
even though I water it everyday.
My hiking boots stands unlaced
by the door
waiting
but
there's no where to go
no one will see to open the door.

—BROOKS CUSHMAN

WARNING . . .

You mustn't
give yourself away
so quickly
you musn't
bare your soul
or turn yourself
inside out
for
just
anyone
to see.

The wall needn't be
so high
that I can't see over
but don't
tear it down
completely

not yet.

I never did care
for reading a tale
when I knew the ending
at the beginning.

—SUSAN DILL

RONDO

circles in faces
going round around round
spinning tongue-twisted
thoughts to tumble
and pollute
the naive minds
of other faces in a crowd
a crowd of faces in circles
encircling the world
eyes closed
the world is ugly
keep eyes closed
the sun will wrinkle
the faces of the circled
nonbelievers
circles never end until they collide
or an inside square bursts wide.

—BROOKS CUSHMAN

ELECTRICLUV

Hard!

one
night
stand

give a great show

all
you've
got

Give!

Lady from Bath

Sha
dy
but

Wh at

a performance:

anemic room—bare bed
faded quilt
faded air

marijuana-stale
blacklight
stark stage

Ac
tion!

roll 'em.

Broadway!

brand
new
play

(performed each week-end)

the
show
will

Goon.

—MARTHA ARTHUR

Why do they call him "the man upstairs"
and then lock him in the basement?

—TERESA TOMLINSON

29 AND HOLDING

When I am 29 and
holding,
I may not need
men around me
so often;
I may not need
to see the admiration
in their eyes;
I may not need
the gentle touch,
the first soft kiss
of a new man,
their subtle testing
of my limits.

When I am 29 and
holding,
I may not need
to make up the
whites of my eyes;
I may not need
to have sexy white teeth;
I may not need
beautifully conditioned hair.

Because,
When I'm 29 and holding;
If all goes well,
There will be one man from
whom I will need and
seek admiration in his eyes.
I will need his gentle
touch—
I will need the
first soft kiss of a new
night
beginning.

—MARSHA WRENN

Needles of ice splinter my toes . . .
I'm walking on your words.

—TERESA TOMLINSON

ROCKING CHAIR

—a play in one act—

Setting: The stage is barren except for a rocking chair (center) and a small side table with one drawer. On the table is an old black telephone. To extreme stage right is a window, hanging in mid-air from the top of the stage. The curtains on each side of the stage and in back are gray.

Scene: An old man in his late sixties, with balding white hair, is rocking at a steady pace, in deep thought. He is dressed in blue overalls, blue shirt; dangling from his pocket is a pocketwatch chain. His hands rest naturally and comfortably on the arms of the chair. As if from a deep sleep, he is awakened by the loud ring of the telephone. After gazing at the ringing phone for a few seconds, he slowly picks it up and speaks into the receiver.

Old Man: Hello? . . . Who? . . . No ma'am, I'm sure this ain't Fred, but maybe I could help you find the number of — **(The caller apparently has hung up on him, so he slams down the receiver.)** Damn. Can't even try to help nobody nowadays—nobody wants nobody's help. Telephones are just too confusing—wrong numbers all the time. **(Back to his rocking, he is quiet for a minute, in deep thought; he then starts to rub the arms of the rocking chair. He addresses the chair.)** Yep, you and me seen a lot of things in our time. **(Rubs over a burned place in the arm of the chair.)** Remember the night John was born—dropped my cigar right here the minute I heard that young'un yell . . . what lungs he had! **(Chuckles to himself, then fingers a deep scratch on the other arm with a disdainful look.)** Now I know you remember this scratch; movin' from Kansas to Chicago, some lame-brain dropped you. Chicago—never did like that place, but Maw said we needed to be near relatives and John could get real educated. **(Another silence; a sad expression on his face.)** After Maw died and John got his fancy education, I knew that place didn't hold nothing for me. John had a big office in the city, and me—all I had was you **(Still looking at chair.)** So here we are, back where we belong, in Kansas, and all I'm doing is sittin' here looking at your birth-marks and aging spots. **(The old man gets out of the chair and slowly walks to the window, looking out dreamily.)** Wonder what John is doin' now. **(Takes out pocketwatch in side pocket of his overalls.)** Probably gettin' ready to eat some dinner. Haven't heard from that boy of mine in months. Big successful lawyer—a farm boy in a monkey suit! Ha, got too big for his britches if you ask me! **(Looks at chair, then at telephone.)** I wonder—**(turns back to the window)**—Nah.**(After a**

few seconds of gazing out the window, he turns and goes back to the chair and sits down. Instead of starting to rock, the old man picks up the phone.) Now, let's see—I think it's "0" I want. (Dials zero and listens attentively.) Yes, hello ma'am. I want to talk to Mr. John Coldman—(wonderingly)—Oh, yeah, where? Now what is the name of that place in Chicago? Sorry, operator, but I've plain dislocated that. You know how it is when you get past forty. (Chuckles in an attempt at a joke. His expression quickly dissolves into hurt; apparently he is being cut short by the operator.) What do you mean, you can't help me, I want to talk to my son—haven't seen or talked to him in six months. (Listens.) Okay, thanks anyway, ma'am. (Puts down receiver.) Now seems like I put that number somewhere; he sent it to me when he moved to a new house. Now let's see. (Starts going through the table drawer.) Ah (smiles broadly), here it is; says "Dial One, then 704-487-6205." Sounds easy. (Picks up receiver and places it awkwardly against his ear while holding the paper in the other hand, and dials the numbers slowly aloud.) 1—7—0—4—4—8—7—6—0—2—5. (Puts down paper and holds phone carefully, listening to rings.) Yes, hello—John? (His face turns red; he seems curious.) Who's this? Wrong number? This isn't—(looks at paper)—what do you mean, people like me shouldn't be allowed to use the phone? Why, you—young—(The phone buzzes in his ear, and he slams it down). All I wanted to do was talk to John, why is it so hard? It's because of fancy fananglin' people and their codes and robes (his voice gets stronger) and systems and computers and numbers! (His voice gets softer.) That's all they've got.

(His face softens into a melancholy expression. He starts his steady rocking, all the while looking at the chair, rubbing the arms.)

—JEANIE SPANGLER

EMERGING VOICES

For the second consecutive year we take pleasure in presenting the prize-winning poems in a competition co-sponsored by Prism and the North Carolina Arts Council. This year's competition drew 398 poems, representing the work of 249 students from 50 different high schools; the results, we believe, are lively evidence that the art of poetry flourishes among the younger generation of North Carolinians. Had we space, we could have published at least thirty additional poems of superior quality. We congratulate all winners, and feel that their work testifies to the accuracy of the competition title: these are among the most articulate of the voices emerging from a highly articulate generation.

Grade 12:

First Place Award

GREY LITTLE, GRIM LITTLE—

There's something about
The grey little grim little
Men of power
The older warriors become button-pushers and
Givers of orders to the givers of orders
With their suitable coldness
Guns and soldiers' philosophers — there's something
That makes me wonder
If they were born old, little and grey.

It's still more depressing to imagine that
The red-headed second baseman — age six —
Might forget
Baseball, butterfly collections
Mama reading a bed-time story
The hurt of a skinned knee
Crying in the small hours of a long night
Because a car hit his puppy.

And become grey and grim
And efficient at killing.

—MELODY IVINS

Grade 12

Smithfield-Selma Senior High School

Smithfield, N. C.

Grade 12:
Second Place Award

MEDITATION IN THE MEN'S ROOM

I sit for hours and wonder why
No one writes "I love you all"
On the obscenely scribbled bathroom wall
As the jerk cuts his wrist a thousand times
Over the sink to my behind
Thank you, God, for such a mind.

—HENRY TURNER
Grade 12
Salisbury High School
Salisbury, N. C.

Grade 12:
Third Place Award

ALONE IN THE RAIN

The slow scrape
 of his battered shoes
 on the rough cement,
The rain water dripping
 off the hat's bib
 on to his numb face,
Or his black, wrinkled hands
 clutched
 to the buttonless coat—
Something—
 made me weep for him,
Alone,
 in the rain.

—BECKY MCREE
Grade 12
Broughton High School
Raleigh, N. C.

Grade 11:
First Place Award

street girl

behind the twilight screen
the girl stands
waiting for hopeful glances

inside the stale dark doorway
she watches
between the curtains of rain

smudges of fingerprints left inked
upon the glasses
candles drip wax on elegant rugs
purple stockings hang on empty shadows

through open windows
curtains blow
a flower wilts on the table

—BECKY COPELAND
Grade 11
Sanderson High School
Raleigh, N. C.

Grade 11:
Second Place Award

IN THE YEAR NINETEEN SEVENTY-TWO

In the year nineteen seventy-two
the twentieth century
on the fifteenth day of September
a Friday
the seventh day of school
where seven hundred and eighty-five students
sit, walk, talk, run, and eat
while the cafeteria is filled with people
during the fourth period
the lobby's filled
people awaiting the bell
to go to fifth
sits one of God's children
out in the smoking pit
sits alone
quiet and lonely
because out of seven hundred
eighty-five students
on a Friday
nobody gives a damn.

—DEBBIE BROWN
Grade 11
South Granville High School
Creedmoor, N. C.

Grade 11:
Third Place Award

HE USED TO . . .

He used to tell me Santa Claus wasn't coming because he broke his leg.
I always believed him
And would cry
Until he gathered me close on his knee and whispered not to worry—
Santa had helpers to deliver play-things and the reindeers
knew the way.

One time he heard a beautiful song and started crying
And it made me ache inside — I had never seen a man cry.
But I loved him for it.

Once I was grown up.
He took me out to dinner and a 3-hour movie
And I felt very proud and even didn't mind his cigar smoke —
It was a part of him just like vinegar on collards.
But he is gone now and I am young again —
I laugh and play silly games and love and believe with all
my heart
While inside me I remember.
I miss him.

—PAIGE CREECH
Grade 11
Smithfield-Selma Senior High School
Smithfield, N. C.

Grade 10:
First Place Award

MESSAGE

I told the sun
as it rose
this morning
to say hello
if it saw you
but I suppose it
will rain
or snow
and my message
will be wet
and cold
when it reaches you.

I hope not.

—ANN RANKIN
Grade 10
Smithfield-Selma Senior High School
Smithfield, N. C.

Grade 10:
Second Place Award

CHALLENGE

I dare you world
I double, triple dare you world

take away your crummy shells and
 cold damp rocks
the wind, go on, take it
 sift it out of me, it's touched me all
unsquinch my eyes.

Come on Indian giver;
 the waves, take
 the waves,
I don't need them or anyone to talk to.
Go on world
 go on

Try and part my footprints and the sand.

—PHILLIP ANGLIN
Grade 10
Myers Park High School
Charlotte, N. C.

Grade 10:
Third Place Award

HERITAGE

Graciously I lead the way
back into the marble rooms, of the
old cold palace, daintily my
fingers curl around the
wooden door knobs of the great
iron doors, lonesome are the marble
rooms under which my forefathers
lie, daily visitors grind down the
stone steps and scuff the waxed
floors, lightly my steps resound
through the darkened halls,
fading in the distance to a
muffled roar only the dead can
hear, lonesome are the marble
rooms, in which my death bed will
lie, on silken pillows my head
will rest, the last of my ancestors.

—TINA SEAWELL
Grade 10
North Moore High School
Robbins, N. C.

Special Merit

SPARROWS

Scattering cinders Sparrows
 stark
 against bleakness
somersault, swoop.
Sparrows spiral
 to
 earth.

—TERRY RHODES
Grade 11
Broughton High School
Raleigh, N. C.

Special Merit

MEMORANDUM

I am not like my sister.
We were not created together
With carbon paper
And typed out like
Copies of a business letter.

We were not fashioned alike
By a printing press,
Or duplicated by a watercolor
Paint set.

She was her own egg,
And I was mine.
And our differences were
Separated by ten years.

What is good for her
Is not for me.
She is my friend,
Though she is the sun
And I am only the moon
And I am very sorry that
I am your darkness.

—JANIE HARDIN
Grade 11
Asheboro High School
Asheboro, N. C.

Special Merit

GROWTH

New black pavement,
Stretches its fingers
For more . . .
Later,
It's knuckles crack.

—BERT VAN DER VAART
Grade 12
Broughton High School
Raleigh, N. C.

Special Merit

THE BEACH BUM

"Why don't you take my hand?" asked he.
"I feel no romantic inclinations," I reply.

He's watched me grow up,
Here on the coast,
Just a lifeguard who never went back to the city.
We talk of Southern architecture
and law
and hurricanes
and way back when.

Such a curious pair we are —
Both brown as a grocery bag,
He in his jamaicas and I in my bikini,
He with his gray hair and I with my bleached blond—
If anyone else cared to be down here in September,
They'd surely stop and stare.

And on wintry Saturday nights
While I watch TV with my mother,
I grin and remember those walks on the beach.

—DORIS LINDA LOWE
Grade 12
Myers Park High School
Charlotte, N. C.

Special Merit

TRUMPET

falling ripples
of deep blue velvet,
a soft crescendo
melting into butter,
warm vibrant tone
caressing air,
tenderly,
full, broad expansion,
total ecstasy,
a fit of impending power,
peaked
and
broken;
ripples of velvet
flowing silently onto
red satin,
floating away
on chiffon.

—JULIE BRADSHAW

Grade 12

Salisbury High School

Salisbury, N. C.

Special Merit

THE PIANO PLAYER

*Inspired by two modern films:
The Pawn Broker and
To Shoot the Piano Player*

He claimed his talent worthless,
But the dancers kept his music spinning;
So why not play their game?
Then one note followed another,
Into minutes and days
Of one second;
What else could he have done?
"Trade your piano
To the pawn-broker!" they cried,
And his music laughed,
It wept in bitter odes to life;
What did they know
About pawns of the broker?

—KATHRYN ALICE SCHWERTMAN

Grade 12

Broughton High School

Raleigh, N. C.

Special Merit

MUSING

My left third toe nail
Is a bit ragged
Is a bit torn

My left third toe nail
Is my favorite
Is unusual

My right third toe nail
Is even
Is smooth

My right third toe nail
Is like the others.
Uniform and dull.

—JANIS BAILEY

Grade 11
Salisbury High School
Salisbury, N. C.

Special Merit

apocryphal

expression of defiance
painted on his face
he stands
ready to meet the world.
"I don't care"
is read everywhere
except his eyes
which cry
"I do."

—JUNE POTTER

Grade 11
Statesville High School
Statesville, N. C.

Special Merit

MIGRANT WORKER

Bitter dust lingers
on hardened lips as sunlight
singes bare shoulders.

—PAGE MILLER

Grade 11
Broughton High School
Raleigh, N. C.

Special Merit

OVER ON THE EDGE

bald rounded hills
limbs alone against a colorless sky
a dusty haired man
mixes his tears with the wind
his shredded standard of defeat
a broken guitar at his feet
yesterday this gentle knight
discovered a wall
over on the edge
he can't climb over
turning to tell
to warn them
his song was consumed in flame
please understand
as he cries
wrapped in the milk of his music

—JAMES ROBIN MACDOWELL
Grade 11
J. F. Webb High School
Oxford, N. C.

Special Merit

elemental
somewhere i heard
that
you were fire and air,
and
i was clear water and earth,
and
i was to become
the left side of your body,
and
you were to become
the right side of mine.
that would be the whole world
in you and me,
and
the whole world is a big place
if you look at it
all at once.

—CINDY STEWART
Grade 11
Bishop McGuinness High School
Winston-Salem, N. C.

Special Merit

SUNDAY'S MESSIAH

The arched hall echoed
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!
Pale green walls drenched
with humidity of thought
Venetian lattices absorbed
the triumphant tempo.
"And the glory shall
be revealed. The Lord
The Lord!"
Resting upon the curvature
of white vaulting a tiny
orange glow pointed upon
his subjects
The air was stale
Hallelujah mounted the
white cross on the velvet
Hallelujah! Hallelujah!

—DENNIS THAW

Grade 11
Salisbury High School
Salisbury, N. C.

Special Merit

TRANSPORTED

I hear the jingling
Of silver bells
I cannot see,
Like the sound
Of the oriental wind
Playing with Chinese chimes
In a garden of paper lanterns
And rich perfumes.

—FRANCES RUFTY

Grade 11
Salisbury High School
Salisbury, N. C.

Special Merit

THE LAST TIME

Resting on the chairs.
Wrinkled faces
Showing worries
But no lies.
"Please don't be long;
I'll miss you so."
He sighed.
The rocker
Creaked
The last time.
One month later
The country air
Blew briskly
But the fireplace
Was black.

—MARIANNA MORRIS
Grade 11
Salisbury High School
Salisbury, N. C.

Special Merit

FOLLOWING THE LEADER

Crash! The symbolic cymbals meet.
Let the games begin!
Five-legged leopards and lopsided lizards.
Slithering snakes gorging on gizards.
Sinister sparrows taunting a turtle.
Salted seal stew commencing to curdle.
Arguing aardvarks advancing to fight.
Red-nosed raccoons spitting in spite.
"Stop!" cried Man, "Your games are too cruel!"
"Hold on," said the beasts, "You made the rules."

—JAMES THOMAS RUDELL
Grade 12
Myers Park High School
Charlotte, N.C.

Special Merit

EARLY EVENING OCEAN

Rocks burnt black
by a setting sun,
whose rays drip
butter-slick

and mingle, against
the blunt shapes
of shadow stones
in the sea.

—JACILYN MIDDLETON

Grade 12

Broughton High School

Raleigh, N. C.

Special Merit

6d

can you dig
the coming revolution?
it
is at
your doorstep
and coming
down
your
throat.
be brave
and
pick a posy.
the fight
needs
beauty
too.

—EMILIE TOWNES

Grade 12

Hillside High School

Durham, N. C.

Special Merit

. . . AFTERWARDS

An army hat
Monsoon soaked
And tattered
Rolls through an empty village
Of dead men, women
And babies.
Somebody kicks it
And cries.

—CATHERINE BRAGG

Grade 12

Salisbury High School

Salisbury, N. C.

Special Merit

STAPLER

Peaceful ore
resting in
dirt.
Scooped out,
thrown down,
melted in
stifling furnaces,
poured in cold gray molds,
filled with
prickly wires,
snapped together.
Monotonous life . . .

—SUSAN LEONARD

Grade 11
Salisbury High School
Salisbury, N. C.

Special Merit

VISION

I remember
once long ago
we went walking
Walking on Frank's land
in the cool winds
of a California mountain day

The sleepy image of a doe
is clouded in my mind
by sun-dappled leaves,
hazy bubbles blooming gold

She was stone frozen
with the magic of reflection
The mirror shattered
And caught in crystal drops—
glistened with dew,
painted with lightdust—
She is still there.

—DANA STURM

Grade 11
Sanderson High School
Raleigh, N. C.

